

Aruba's

Grassroots Art Movement

Text by Tina Causey-Bislick
Photography by Steve Keith



An amber- and rose-hued dusk settles over the Dutch colonial architecture of downtown Oranjestad's Mainstreet. Merchants shutter their windows and doors, closing up for the evening. The remaining shoppers and sightseers call it a day and jump on the last passing streetcar. On most nights, the streets here in town become quiet, and the old historic buildings, so loyal to Oranjestad's streetscape for decades, patiently stand sentry awaiting another sunrise to bring life and energy to Mainstreet.

But tonight is not like every other night. A slight glow is coming from one of the alley streets just off Mainstreet. The mellow hum of music and laughter drifts with the wind and beckons me. The sounds are emanating from a street called Korteweg. It's a small, block-length street lined by aged buildings eager for attention yet still so appealing in their seemingly intrinsic,

time-earned wisdom. Rounding the corner, I am welcomed to a scene that is a funky hipster-cum-bohemian mash with a dash of island cool.

A crowd of local artists is joined by friends in the community for the island's first "pop-up art gallery." A trending cultural phenomenon in cities like London, New York, and Chicago, temporary art galleries allow artists the ability to curate their works with minimal investment. Much like how many talented chefs in the U.S. are turning to food trucks in lieu of making expensive investments in rents, mortgages, and the associated costs of serving their food in brick-and-mortar establishments, artists are turning to pop-up galleries for the opportunity to showcase their work in a low-cost, up-close-and-personal setting instead of waiting for an invitation to exhibit in a traditional gallery.

Aptly called Korteweg after the street it is

Inspiration: "Born in the fishing village of Savaneta, I like to use colors in my work...it's the energy of the Caribbean that reflects my carefree lifestyle in Aruba, my walks in the mondi (countryside), and Aruba's sea."

Romelinda Maldonado /KALA

Crafts and photography

Inspiration: "Nature and its way—beautiful and simple yet complex and powerful. The pace of time, seasons, memories, and the lessons I have learned—it comes from inside and the urge to create."

Maria Onni/Heartmade Driftwood Art

Crafts and paintings

Inspiration: She gives life to the wood by creating unique and colorful characters that she calls "Aruba's faces."

Armando Goedgedrag/ Artmando Multimedia Paintings

Inspiration: "Nature and music are the main sources of inspiration for my painting, photography, videography, animation, and graphic design."

Maja Lepsanovic/Heartmade Driftwood Art

Crafts and paintings

Inspiration: Her inspiration coming from Aruba's nature, she paints animals on pieces of driftwood in her own colorful, funky, and unique style.

Carlos Meneses/297 Boards

Hand-painted Skateboards

Inspiration: "Rolling on a unique piece of wood from the earliest boards to the most current."

Ashlin Ahlip/ Tangerine Handmade in Aruba

Bags, pouches, and wallets

Inspiration: Great craftsmanship and his favorite quote: "Analyze what inspires you."

Cado de Lannoy/CADOSBLA

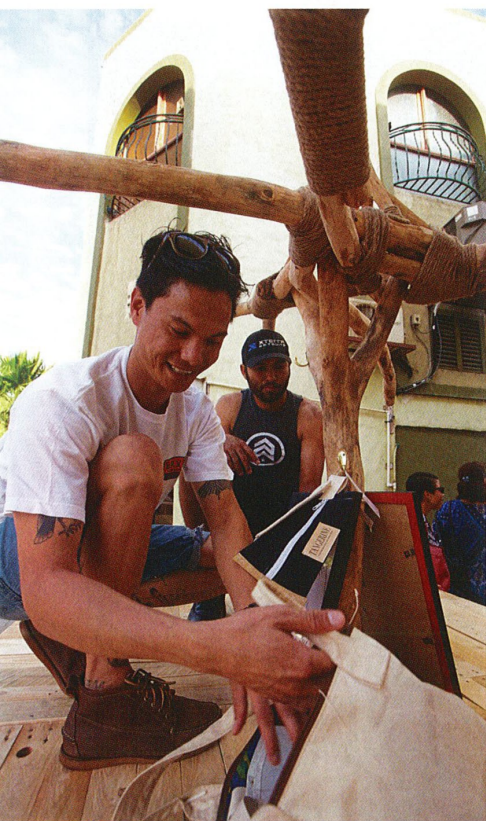
Photography and pallet/reclaimed wood designer

Inspiration: "Growing up in Aruba with white sandy beaches, picturesque palm- and hotel-lined streets—it's an island filled with hidden gems! I've always been inspired by Aruban subculture, and this is my reflection of Aruba."

Juni Briezen/Juni's Place

Pallet/reclaimed wood designer

Inspiration: "I like the idea of creating something that can make people think 'how did he do that?' and inspire others with that concept...I start with a project that seems to be impossible so my creativity will have no boundaries." T



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